



April 10, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden  
Chairman  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone  
Ranking Member  
House Energy and Commerce Committee  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

I am writing today on behalf of the members of Washington State Pharmacy Association to express appreciation for your efforts to address the opioid epidemic. Our Washington state pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are dedicated to working with Congress and other health professionals and stakeholders to identify ways pharmacists can help curb opioid abuse and misuse and positively impact treatment. We believe that by more fully engaging pharmacists on the health care team presents a unique opportunity to improve outcomes for Medicare patients and reduce challenges, including those related to opioids. Pharmacists play a unique role in patients' care as they are the medication experts, and with 89% of Americans living within five miles of a community pharmacy, frequently the health care professional that a patient will see the most. Washington state has many rural communities and I can attest to the important role these pharmacists play in providing access to health care.

Today's pharmacists are trained and licensed to provide many services in addition to dispensing prescription medications and helping patients use them safely. As part of the health care team, pharmacists can play an important role in helping to address opioid misuse and abuse as well as treatment. When pharmacists are able to work with other providers on the patient's health care team, it improves care coordination and delivery, resulting in better health outcomes for Medicare patients. As the medication use experts, pharmacists can help prescribers determine the optimal drug for the indication, determine duration, appropriate quantities to dispense in the outpatient settings, and oversee the plan through transitions of care.

WSPA strongly believes that Medicare patients should be able to access pharmacists' services as private insurance patients have been able to do here in Washington since 2015. Through pharmacists' better engagement, we help prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse, in addition to improve treatment outcomes. Authorizing pharmacist clinical services in the Medicare Part B benefit would expand beneficiaries' access to care including medication and pain management services and treatment.

Pharmacists in Washington, with a collaborative drug therapy agreement in place, are providing care in community pharmacies resulting in more rapid assessment and initiation of therapy, thus improving patient health outcomes. We believe it is important that Medicare patients have access to these same services where pharmacists provide care for ailments and conditions such as:

1. Bronchospasm, wheezing, shortness of breath from asthma or COPD
2. Animal Bite (Human, Dog, or Cat)
3. Eye or nasal symptoms from seasonal allergies or other allergic conditions
4. Herpes virus infections (cold sores, genital herpes, shingles)
5. Allergic reactions from bee stings (not anaphylactic)
6. Acute otitis media
7. Anaphylactic allergic reactions
8. Lacerations and abrasions
9. Nausea and vomiting (not related to motion sickness)
10. Contraceptive pregnancy prevention
11. Conjunctivitis
12. Nausea and vomiting caused by motion sickness
13. Wound infections from burns
14. Migraine headaches
15. Ear infections caused by bacteria
16. Lack of fluoride for oral health
17. Diarrhea that occurs while traveling
18. Uncomplicated urinary tract infections
19. Vaginal yeast infections
20. Streptococcal pharyngitis

Collaborative drug therapy agreements are the foundation for pharmacists to manage and monitor prescription pain treatment plans as well.

Over 250 of your colleagues have cosponsored the *Pharmacy and Medically Underserved Areas Enhancement Act* (H.R. 592) that would provide medically underserved beneficiaries with access to Medicare Part B services by pharmacists, consistent with state scope of practice law. We appreciate the Committee's attention to H.R. 592 and look forward to working with you on its passage as an important way to help address the opioid crisis.

Thank you, again, for your leadership in addressing the opioid epidemic. Washington state pharmacists and pharmacy technicians welcome the opportunity to work with you to better utilize pharmacists to help Medicare beneficiaries access the care they need to positively impact this serious problem facing our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JR", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jeff Rochon, Pharm.D.  
Chief Executive Officer